

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

Office of Fire and Aviation
3833 South Development Avenue
Boise, Idaho 83705

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Instruction Memorandum No. OF&A 2000-006
Expires: 09/30/01

To: All Field Offices

From: Director, Office of Fire and Aviation

Subject: Implementation of SAFENET

The purpose of this Instruction Memorandum is to initiate the implementation of SAFENET throughout the Bureau of Land Management, other wildland fire agencies, and the wildland fire community.

SAFENET is a form and process designed for reporting and correcting unsafe situations in fire operations (wildland and prescribed). It is patterned after the Aviation SAFECOM that has already been successfully used for several years. SAFENET was developed in response to the "Interagency Wildland Firefighter Safety Awareness Study," and is sponsored by the Interagency SAFE Initiative.

Beginning with the 2000 fire season, SAFENET forms will be available on incidents from fire safety officers. SAFENET forms will also be distributed to Incident Command Teams, various training sessions, national meetings, and through regular agency distribution channels. SAFENET forms may also be ordered through the National Fire Equipment System under form number NFES 2633. SAFENET may be submitted electronically, beginning April 1, 2000 at www.nifc.gov. It can be filled out interactively and submitted directly to the national center.

SAFENET is intended to be a tool for frontline firefighters to initiate and document corrective action of unsafe situations in fire operations. Prompt replies to the originator, timely action to correct problems, and discussion of field SAFENETs at local level meetings encourage program participation, active reporting, and are imperative to the safety of employees on the fireline.

A copy of the SAFENET form, and a Questions and Answer Sheet on SAFENET, are attached for your information and distribution.

Questions regarding this form or process may be directed to Sandy Guches, Safety Manager, National Office of Fire and Aviation at (208)387-5175.

Signed by:

Edward W. Shepard

Acting Director, Office of Fire and Aviation

Authenticated by:

Pat Lewis

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2 - Attachments

1 - SAFENET Form (pdf file - hard copy attached) (3 pp.)

2 - SAFENET Questions and Answers (6 pp.)

SAFENET
Questions and Answers
January 2000

1. What is SAFENET?

SAFENET is a new form and process designed for frontline firefighters.

2. What is the purpose of SAFENET?

SAFENET provides another way for frontline firefighters to be heard – to get unsafe situations resolved on the fireline. SAFENET is also a means of providing important safety-related data to the national center to help determine long-term trends and problem areas.

3. Why was SAFENET developed?

SAFENET is a response to numerous requests from field fire managers and firefighters. These requests culminated in the Wildland Firefighter Safety Awareness Study, and became a recommendation of Phase III of that Study.

4. Who fills out SAFENET?

Anybody with a valid concern about unsafe situations in fire operations.

5. When do I fill SAFENET out?

SAFENET may be filled out anytime you want to document an unsafe situation.

6. Can I fill out SAFENET for a non-incident situation?

Yes. Although SAFENET is intended for wildland fire operations, it has been extended to include such activities as training, and all-risk (floods, hurricanes, etc).

7. What type of safety issues should I report?

Any safety issue. SAFENET not only begins corrective action, it also documents the issue. SAFENET should also be used to document “near misses.” We ask only that SAFENET submissions *not* be frivolous or personal “paybacks.”

8. Who do I give this form to?

Preferrably, give SAFENET to your supervisor. You may, however, submit SAFENET to the fire safety officers, the incident commander, even the agency administrator. SAFENET may also be electronically submitted directly to the national center.

9. Where does this form go?

Preferrably to your first-line supervisor. However, you have the option of forwarding the form to the Fire Safety Officer, the Incident Commander, the agency administrator, etc. Ultimately the form goes to the national center in Boise and the data input into an interagency database.

10. What role does my supervisor have with SAFENET?

The supervisor's role is the key to corrective action. If *you* are unable to take corrective action, the supervisor *should* be able to do so.

11. Why should I submit SAFENET to, or inform my supervisor of, submission?

The whole idea with SAFENET is that corrective action can most effectively be taken at the ground level. The supervisor is key to making this happen.

12. Do I have to sign my name to this form?

No. You have the right to file a SAFENET anonymously, however, issues can often be resolved more quickly if they can be discussed with the originator.

13. If I submit SAFENET with my name, is it confidential?

No. If you want complete confidentiality when filing SAFENET, file it without using your name.

14. Will I be punished for using SAFENET?

No. You will not be punished for using SAFENET. However, if you feel some reason to fear punishment, then file SAFENET anonymously. Equal consideration will be given to all SAFENET filings regardless if they are signed or not.

15. Is use of SAFENET mandatory?

No, but you have a better chance of having your issues resolved if you use it.

16. Is everybody using SAFENET?

We hope so. SAFENET is being promoted throughout all fire organizations, be they local, state, or federal.

17. Who provides the corrective action?

It is hoped that the originator of the SAFENET will provide the corrective action. If that person cannot accomplish it, then the SAFENET must be sent to the person who *can* resolve the issue.

18. Is SAFENET the only way to initiate corrective action?

No. Corrective action for safety-related problems should come from any source you can find. SAFENET is just being provided as another vehicle to voice your concerns.

19. Did the field have input into the development of SAFENET?

People at the field level were consulted during all aspects of SAFENET development. Additionally, SAFENET was field tested for one year in the Pacific Northwest to gain insight into field level concerns before making it a national program.

20. Where can I get a SAFENET on an incident?

The safety officer on any incident should have a SAFENET form. If for some reason one is not available, just document the incident and file a SAFENET when you do find a form, or when you next have access to a computer.

21. Does SAFENET replace accident reporting?

No. The Safety Management Information System (SMIS) Accident/Incident Report is the official Department of the Interior system for reporting incidents and accidents. The U. S. Forest Service has the same basic reporting system called SHIPS – Safety and Health Integrated Personnel System.

22. Why should I fill out “Agency/Organization” in the top block?

Even though providing your name is optional, providing your agency/organization information allows for faster corrective action by the responsible party(ies), if it is known what agency or jurisdiction you belong to. It also assists higher levels of the organization to ensure that corrective action was taken.

23. What is meant by “Jurisdiction” in the “Event” block?

“Jurisdiction/local unit” identifies who has land management authority where the event occurred. An example: “Bureau of Land Management/Elko Field Office,” “California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection, Lassen-Modoc Ranger Unit.”

24. What is meant by “All risk” in the “Event” block?

“All risk” in this case is a generic term indicating all non-wildland fire activities which require an incident management response, such as flood, hurricane, search and rescue and so forth.

25. What is a “wildland fire for resource benefits”?

“Wildland fire for resource benefits” is a term used to describe wildland fires that are managed to meet resource objectives. These fires are allowed to burn under approved prescriptive conditions, and are managed using a full continuum of strategic and tactical options.

26. What is meant by “Transition/Transfer of Command” in the “Event” block?

“Transition” refers to that period of an incident when it moves from one readily defined stage to another, such as from initial to extended attack, local management control to Incident Management Team (IMT) control or vice versa.

“Transfer of Command” refers to the formal process of transferring incident command authority and the new Incident Commander assumes incident responsibility (e.g., signing Delegation of Authority).

27. What is meant by “Position title” in the “Event” block?

“Position title” refers to your position on the incident at the time of the event in question or concern. For instance, you may have been assigned as a Strike Team Leader, Crew at the time of concern (which may or may not have been your assignment at other times on that incident).

28. What is meant by “Management level” in the “Event” block?

The Incident Command System defines levels of complexity and management of incidents, from the most complex (Type 1) to the least complex (Type 5). A variety of factors are used to define those levels. For wildland fire, those factors or criteria may be found in the Fireline Handbook and other agency manuals.

29. What do you mean by “human factors” in the Contributing Factors block?

Human factors are the interactions of the individual with the work environment that often contribute to, or cause incidents/mishaps. The interactions generally fall into two categories: behavior and mechanical/physical. Behavior includes such things as decisions/decision making, communications and interaction with others. Mechanical/physical include such things as compatibility of tools, equipment, procedures, design of things, arrangement of instruments or controls.

30. Who completes the “corrective action” block?

The person who responds to and/or resolves the immediate issue described in the SAFENET. The intent is to eliminate the unsafe situation at the administrative level closest to the place and time of the incident. As the SAFENET works its way through the system, ultimately to the national level, there may be several “corrective actions” that are appropriate. Operationally, the goal is to remove the risk from the workplace. Pragmatically, the goal is to fix any contributing or causal factors, training, procedure or standard to eliminate the risk.

31. How is SAFENET different than SAFECOM?

In terms of intent, there are no differences. SAFECOMS deal with aviation incidents/mishaps and SAFENETS deal with ground operations incidents/mishaps. SAFECOMS go to aviation program managers and SAFENETS go to operations program managers for either reporting purposes or resolution.

32. What will the National Center do with SAFENET information?

The national fire management safety program managers at NIFC will receive all SAFENETS. Each will be reviewed to see what kinds of safety issues are being reported and how the issues are being resolved, and the timeliness of resolution and what levels of the organization. SAFENETS will be used to identify national trends, and to alert all fire program personnel of situations that warrant consideration or need. SAFENETS also will be used to identify new safety issues that may not be obvious to local personnel but would show up in the aggregated information.

33. Where can I find an electronic version of SAFENET?

An electronic version of SAFENET will be available on the internet. The site address is www.nifc.gov. Some firefighters may not have internet access, so it is important to make sure some form of SAFENET is completed and filed as soon as possible, and that it is given to the person who can take action to correct the safety issue.

34. Do electronic and hard copy versions of SAFENET go to the same place?

Yes. Electronic submissions go directly to the national center. Hard copy submissions should be mailed, by the reviewer, to: SAFENET, P.O. Box 16645, Boise, ID 83715-6645.

35. Will SAFENET be included in future fire training?

Yes, the plan is for training in SAFENET to be included in the 2000 annual refresher training as well as other fire training courses in the fire career progression.

36. Where does the electronic SAFENET go when you hit the submit button?

The SAFENET will be delivered to the person responsible for fire safety on the unit, the regional/state fire safety officer and to the national data base located at NIFC.